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THE MISSIONARIES IN JAPAN.

The following letter appeared in *The Japan Weekly Mail* of March 26th, 1892 and was called out by certain severe criticisms embodied in a communication over the signature, "Hard Fact," in the issue of March 12th. It is now reprinted with a few verbal changes, for private distribution.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "JAPAN MAIL."

Sir,—It may seem ungracious after your very generous defence of the missionaries to call further attention to this subject. Still, there are certain points upon which a missionary's testimony is from the nature of the case, more definite, and hence, perhaps, worth adding to your admirable remarks.

Your correspondent, "Hard Fact," asks the question, Do missionaries belong to "a highly educated class, graduates of the great universities," &c.? To this question he answers, "No." A very superficial acquaintance with the *personnel* of the different missions would have made such an answer impossible. Of the German missionaries, all have been university men. Of the British missionaries, a goodly number hold degrees from Cambridge or Oxford. It would be difficult to extemporize any very accurate statement regarding the number of college trained men among the American missionaries, and hence, for the sake of definiteness, I will confine what I have to say on this point to my own Mission, that of the American Board, remarking by the way, that I know this Mission is not by any means exceptional. In the last official list there appeared the names of twenty-nine missionaries. All but five of these were college graduates. Of the twenty-four college men, most of whom graduated with high honors, five hold degrees won by faithful work at Yale University, two at Michigan, and one at Harvard. The remainder, with few if any exceptions, are from colleges which, though not possessing the same facilities for post-graduate study, are not, as regards distinctively college work, inferior to Yale or Harvard. Of the five who do not hold college degrees, two are laymen. All of the five have by success in their different departments amply justified their appointment.

In taking the literary work of the missionaries as a standard of their ability, it is no more fair to set down those who do not write, as

indolent or incapable, than it would be to treat the medical profession in the same way. The literary missionaries are specialists and the number of specialists in any class must be relatively small. Again, literary work in a foreign tongue, or dealing with foreign subjects, presupposes long residence. Contrary to the prevailing opinion, the missionaries who have been on the ground ten years constitute a small fraction of the whole number. Relatively to this small fraction, I contend that the missionaries have no need to blush for the meagreness of the list of those who have gained a distinguished place among the scholars of Japan.

In philology no better work has been done in Japan than Dr. Hepburn's Dictionary and Dr. Imbrie's "Etymology." Not long ago a Japanese professor in the Imperial University remarked that only three translations worthy of the name had appeared in Japan. These were the late Senator Nakamura's translation of "Self Help," Mr. Mitsukuri's Code Napoleon and the Japanese version of the Bible. Another well known Japanese has described the last named version as "unparalleled." It is true, the committees in charge of this version had the advantage of skilled Japanese associates, yet this praise is intended as a tribute to the success of the missionary committees. It is interesting to note that a missionary, the Rev. Dr. Verbeek, contributed a not unimportant part to the success of Mr. Mitsukuri's scholarly work. The same gentleman's version of the Psalms is unexcelled as a faithful and idiomatic translation. Dr. M. L. Gordon's researches in the field of Japanese Buddhism and those of Dr. G. Wm. Knox in Chinese philosophy are deserving of high praise. One of the best surgeons in Japan outside of the capital is the Rev. W. Taylor, M.D. of Osaka. In the speciality of abdominal surgery, it may be questioned whether he has a superior in Japan. His successful removal of an important visceral tumor was recently noticed in your columns. Dr. Taylor has also gained great credit as a microscopist. The results of his work in this department have been published in Japan, China, and the United States and are well known to the profession. The Rev. John T. Gulick, Ph. D., also of Osaka, has been described by no less a scholar than Mr. G. J. Romanes as the most profound thinker on Darwinian subjects since Darwin. Mr. Wallace in one of his recent books devotes several pages to the discussion of Dr. Gulick's published opinions. His writings appear from time to time in *Nature* and other scientific periodicals. The main literary strength of the missionary body, however, has been expended in work in the Japanese language. The amount of literature which has grown up under their hands, or through their inspiration, is already very large. If this be set aside simply because it is chiefly concerned with theistic subjects, as your correspondent seems to suggest should be done, a large share of the world's best literature must go with it. A belief in theism does not indicate feebleness of intellect. Mr. John Fiske says atheism is bad

philosophy, and even Mr. Herbert Spencer, according to the testimony of his friend Mr. Minot J. Savage, holds that the Unknown, though not anthropomorphic, is nothing *less* than personal.

It cannot be said of the above mentioned gentlemen, that these special studies have led to decay of interest in direct missionary work, for the list contains the names of some of the foremost men in distinctively religious activities.

Further, it is intimated that missionaries desire to avail themselves of the secular power. It happens, however, that in Japan (and we are now chiefly concerned with Japan), the great majority of the missionaries is strongly in favor of treaty revision and a revision which shall place them entirely under Japanese control. I cannot speak so positively of other missions, but I do not think there is one member of the American Board's Mission who would not rejoice in a treaty which should abolish extra-territoriality. Some eight years ago, at the instance of this mission, a memorial urging the speedy revision of the present treaty between Japan and the United States, was presented to the President by a committee of which, if I mistake not, President Angell of Michigan University, formerly Minister to China, was the chairman. A vote taken nearly two years ago by the Osaka Missionary Conference and the memorial of the British missionaries about the same time show, that this Mission does not stand alone. So far as other views have at any time been advanced by missionaries, it has been chiefly on the ground of the more complicated interests of the non-missionary community and an unwillingness to act, where such interests were involved, against the judgment of public men of long experience and acknowledged wisdom.

It is assumed by your correspondent that Christianity, so far as it has gained acceptance at all, has gained it solely among the ignorant and lowly. There could not be a greater mistake. The *shizoku* are the intellectual class of Japan. This class comprises, roughly speaking, five per cent. of the entire population. In the country at large, nearly forty per cent. of the Christians are *shizoku*. In the city of Tokyo in the churches with which I am most familiar, nearly seventy-five per cent. of the members are *shizoku*. In one of these churches are to be found two officials of *chokunin** rank, both of whom have resided long abroad in high official positions. There are besides not less than twelve officials of *sōnin*† rank. I need not say that this church is financially independent, and has been so since its organization five years ago. It has an income of nearly *yen*‡ 1,200, and has recently built a church at an expense of *yen* 3,500. This church, while possibly embracing more officials in its membership, is not

* Officials holding appointments directly from the Emperor.

† Officials holding appointments from the Council of State with the Sanction of the Emperor.

‡ The *yen* is equivalent to about seventy cents, U. S. gold.

superior to many others associated with the same, or other missions. It was no accident that the last House of Representatives of the Imperial Diet should have included thirteen Christians and that three or four Christians should have had seats in the House of Peers, or that in the recent elections nine Christians should have been returned. In the prefectural assemblies the Christians have also won an enviable place. In Tokyo and Kyoto, some of the most influential members of the city and prefectural assemblies are Christians, while in Gunma Prefecture out of a total of sixty members in the Assembly, eight are Christians and from among them the president was chosen. The extract from the **Waseda Bungaku Zasshi* recently published in your column regarding Christianity in Japanese literature is further testimony to the impression missionary work has made upon Japanese society.

It is often claimed that the missionaries are not welcome. This is doubtless true as regards certain individuals and classes, but they receive abundant assurance of the good will of the Japanese people. My own Mission is actually embarrassed by the pressure put upon it for the extension of its work. There are few touring missionaries who are not overwhelmed by the calls made upon them. As regards my own work, two men could not do the amount of touring which my Japanese friends urge upon me. Not long since I visited a county capital, a town of 6,000 inhabitants. The very best men of the place, among them the two judges of the county court, not only attended the lectures, but came to the hotel at half past four in the morning to see me off. I visited the same town a few days ago and the same men showed me the same attentions. This is no sporadic case, nor am I peculiarly favored in such matters. Is it strange in view of such attentions from such men, that we regard ourselves as welcome? Since I began this communication a telegram has come to announce the death of the wife of a Japanese Christian. I have also been appealed to for help by the friends of a poor fellow, who through business troubles has taken to drink, and whose father, a helpless paralytic, is overwhelmed by his grief and disappointment. Neither father nor son is a member of the Christian community. I have tried by my letters to comfort the bereaved husband, to encourage the disheartened and wayward son and to ease the anxiety of the invalid father. But why is it that these men seventy or eighty miles away turn to a missionary in their sorrow and distress? Am I wrong in thinking it is because he has won their regard and confidence?

Again, the managers of a well known establishment in Tokyo, employing several hundred hands, some days ago sent to me for

* The *Waseda Bungaku Zasshi*, i.e., *The Waseda Literary Magazine*, is published under the auspices of Count Okuma's celebrated college, The Tokyo Semmon Gakkō. It stands in the forefront of the literary magazines of Japan. It has been styled *The Atlantic Monthly* of Japan.

advice with regard to employing women as clerks. They requested further, that, if I approved the plan, I would recommend two young women, but they stipulated that these should be Christians. So far as I know, these men are not themselves Christians. Is it unreasonable for a missionary to look upon both this request and the stipulation as the sign of an influence extending far beyond the sphere of his direct labor? Is it probable that an influence like this would grow up if the class which he represents were abnormally ignorant and vulgar? I must not be misunderstood. I have no desire to institute a comparison between Japanese society and that of western lands. Such a comparison would be invidious at the best, and certainly would necessitate a more careful weighing of this against that than is possible in a newspaper article. It is freely conceded, that Japanese society exhibits much that is worthy of imitation. No man who is not ready to be a learner is worthy to be a teacher in these matters of social and religious reform. We all know Japanese at whose feet we are quite willing to sit. The question does not lie in my mind as one of comparison, certainly not as one which must lead to a simple and unqualified judgment, but it presents itself rather in this form:—Are there not certain religious and moral forces which we ourselves feel and whose effects are seen in other lands which will be helpful to our Japanese friends and to Japanese society? For my part, after a reasonably observant life of missionary service covering more than twenty years, I am constrained to answer, not in arrogance I trust, but with the emphasis of firm conviction, Yes. The labor we expend in the effort to augment the moral and religious forces of this empire is not in any sense of the term, unproductive. The fruits of this work may not be susceptible of measurement by the yardstick or the scales, yet they represent some of the most beneficent influences the world has ever known.

The calls upon the missionaries to which reference has already been made, will indicate some of the ways in which their work bears fruit. I will endeavor to point out certain other lines of influence. If in doing so I limit myself chiefly to the social side of our work, it must not be taken to mean, that I think lightly of the religious side, for I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. It is still the power of God. Let me indicate some of the ways in which the missionary's influence is felt. In a retired valley of Jōshū there is a little hamlet of charcoal burners. A few years ago their manner of life was the rudest possible. There seemed no glimmer of hope for better things. A colporteur in passing through the valley, spoke to the people. Two men became interested and purchased copies of the New Testament. Their employers soon noticed a change in the grade of charcoal from these two men—it was more carefully burned, was better packed and free from stones and grass. This charcoal was looked upon as a special brand and brought a special price. On Sundays, work was

suspended and these men with their families, gathered for religious worship and the study of the Bible. Shortly after, they began to reclaim the mountain land around them, to plant wheat and garden stuff, and recently one of them has become forehanded enough to build a neat frame house in place of his old hut. His employers say, he is the most efficient and trustworthy man in the mountain. He himself says he owes his new vigor to his weekly day of rest and that without it he could not do his work. Both men recognize the value of the aid their church gives them, and though it is ten miles away, they contribute liberally and gladly to the support of their pastor. I know a clock factory in Kyoto employing a hundred hands which owes its existence to the same source as that solitary house in the mountain valley. Work which yields such results seems to me worth doing.

Again, it is a frequent complaint on the part of the silk dealers in Yokohama that much of the silk offered is of inferior and very uneven quality. One of the most important causes of this inferiority lies in the excessive hours of labor exacted of the operatives in the country filatures. In very many cases, the operatives work from early dawn till ten at night. A Japanese student of social science, who has studied several years both in England and Germany and has won deserved recognition from his own Government, informs me, that these operatives are no worse off than many others—that in some towns where spinning and weaving are extensively carried on, the working day extends from the first daylight until nearly eleven o'clock at night. He further says, that in such towns it is rare to find an operative over thirty years of age. Excessive labor causes an early break down of the nervous system which renders subsequent labor impossible, even if life itself be not sacrificed. While in many respects the working people of Japan are favored above their Western compeers, there is as yet no public sentiment on this phase of the labor question which is worthy of the name, though individuals here and there are deeply interested in it, as I am glad to testify. The Christians have had their attention called to the condition of these operatives, and are seeking in different ways to cultivate a better public sentiment regarding it. The management of one filature, at least, is now divided with reference to granting relief to its operatives by reducing the hours of labor. The prospect is, that the Christians will prevail and secure a reduction of the daily hours of labor as well as a weekly day of rest.

One small but independent church is located near the gate of a large Government filature where some five hundred operatives, mostly young girls, are employed. They are far from their homes and exposed to many temptations. The officials in charge, so far as I can learn, are worthy of great praise and the hours of labor are relatively few; but in spite of all that can be done, the situation is a trying one for these young women. The church has sought to

help them. In a single year some sixteen were brought within its protection. As it happened, all these girls, having served out their term, returned home, and so a new beginning became necessary. As the first fruits of this new effort, two or more have joined the Christians. One of the first mentioned girls was so impressed with what she owed to these disinterested friends, that she begged the privilege of sweeping the church—she had no money to give, for she earned but a bare support—in testimony of her deep sense of obligation, and her beaming face told of the joy she found in the menial service which to her was a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Space would fail me were I to attempt to write of the schools for poor children, the orphan asylums and hospitals which owe their origin to the missionary movement, though they are mostly under Japanese control. One of the smaller asylums, however, seems to me worthy of a passing word. It has nineteen inmates. The manager has given himself heart and soul to this enterprize and through his own sacrifices and enthusiastic industry he has rendered it self-supporting, that is, his own earnings combined with those of the children meet very nearly the entire current expenses, though friends have aided in the purchase of the home. This asylum is but one of many institutions which testify to the working of a new force in Japanese society. You have yourself, Mr. Editor, referred sufficiently to the schools and their successes. I will not add to what you have so well said.

This subject is by no means exhausted, but I fear I have already passed the limit of your patience. As I contemplate the many doors already open to us missionaries and the new avenues for influence which the future is evidently about to disclose, I feel oppressed by the weight of the responsibility which rests upon me in common with my colleagues; but, at the same time, my sense of the nobility of the work to which I believe God has called us grows with each day. To be one of a company which is able to aid at so many different points in the building up of New Japan seems to me a privilege and the work, a holy work. With many apologies for the length of this communication,

I remain, yours faithfully,

D. C. GREENE.

Ichigaya, Tōkyō, March 23rd, 1892.
